

Ṣaṃskāra
(Rite of passage)
Part-5
Vānaprastha Ṣaṃskāra

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Prenatal ceremonies

1. **Garbhādhāna saṃskāra** (The rite of passage of conception)
2. **Puṃsavana** (Rite of passage of fetus protection)
3. **Sīmantonayana** (Rite of passage for the mental development)

After birth Ceremonies

4. **Jātakarma**: Rite of a new-born infant
5. **Nāma-karaṇa**: Ceremony of naming a child
6. **Niṣkrāmaṇa** :Baby's first outing
7. **Anna prāśana** :a baby's first intake of solid food
8. **Mundana** :Shaving the child's head for the first time
9. **Karṇa vedha** :Piercing the child's ear lobes

Educational Ceremonies

10. **Upanayana** or Yajñopavīta
11. **Vedārambha**: (*the beginning of formal learning.*)
12. **Samāvartana** (*The ceremony of completion of education*)

Life stages

13. **Vivāha Saṃskāra** (*Wedding Ceremony*)

14. Vānaprastha āśrama

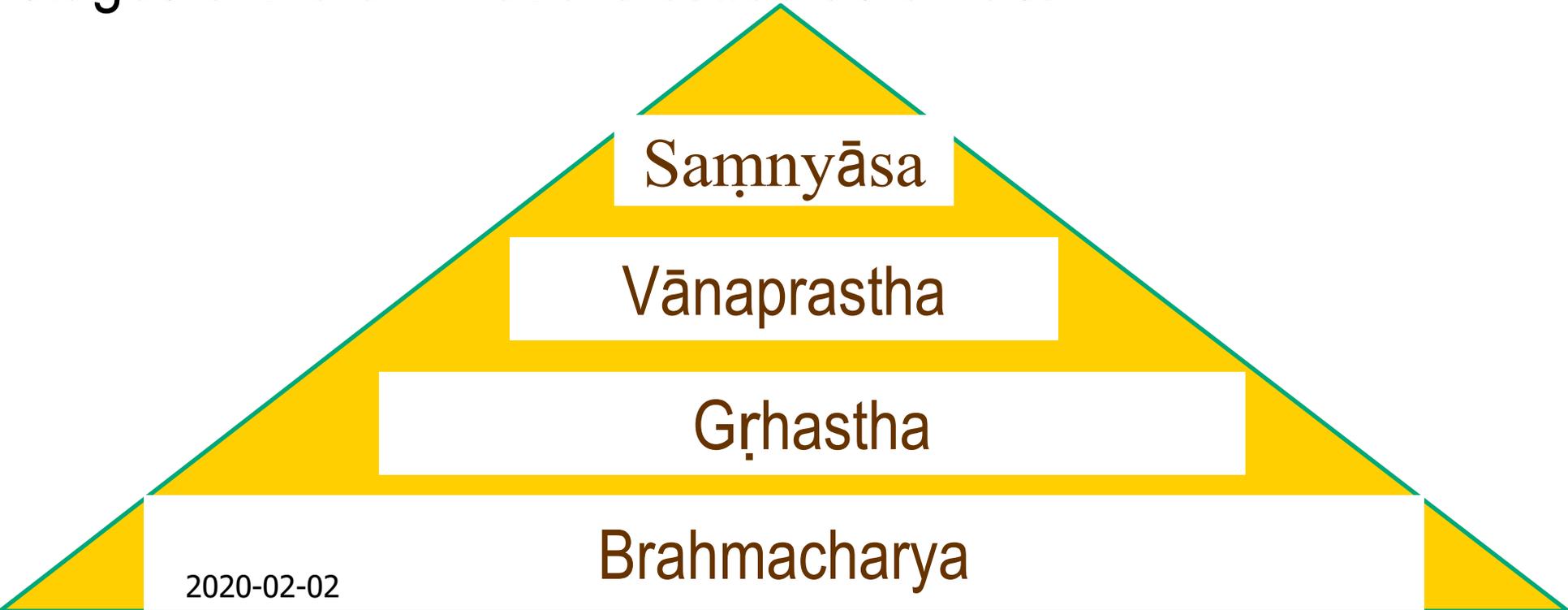
With the commencement of this ceremony, a man completes his or her duties of Household life and enters in to **Vānaprastha-āśrama** (stage of retired life).

In this *āśrama* (stage of life), a person gradually withdraws himself from his family matters to discharge his duties towards society and prepares himself for the next stage of life of absolute renunciation (*Sam-nyāsa*).

Four stages of Life

Vedic texts consider life as a journey which had four halts or encampments, and in which we have to move ahead, whether or not we like it.

Each individual is expected to pass through these four stages of life or what are called āśramas.



14. Vānaprastha āśrama

ब्रह्मचर्याश्रमं समाप्य गृही भवेद्

गृही भूत्वा वनी भवेद् वनी भूत्वा प्रब्रजेत् ।

Shatapatha Brāhmana

It is proper for a man that after completing the *Brahmacharya* life, he enters the householder's life (*gṛhastha*), and on finishing that, he enters the *Vānaprastha* life.

Finally, he enters and accepts the discipline and duties of *Sam-nyāsa* life.

14. Vānaprastha āśrama

When one has successfully lived a householder's life, feels the appearance of signs of age, and grand children are born , one should move on to the *Vānaprastha* stage by detaching oneself from the responsibilities of life.

गृहस्थस्तु यदा पश्येद् वलीपलितमात्मनः ।

अपत्यस्यैव चापत्यं तदारण्यं समाश्रयेत् ॥ *Manu Smṛti.6 .2*

14. Vānaprastha āśrama

One has to transfer the responsibilities to the future generations and set foot on the next path of the journey.

Four stages of Life

Samnyāsa

Vānaprastha

Gṛhastha

Brahmacharya

14. Vānaprastha āśrama

Though *Vānaprastha* literally means setting out for the forest to make one's abode there, yet in reality it signifies **a change in attitude.**

It means instead of being stuck and tethered to the world and its objects, one should voluntarily renounce them after having had one's full share of enjoyment.

The stage is set for introspection and reassessment of life's goals.

The next stage is of complete renunciation.

Two natures of life

■ Pravṛtti (pursuit) → Matter

■ Nivṛtti (withdrawal) → Spirit

- Renunciation follows enjoyment. This is the law of nature. We must enjoy because we are here, we should renounce because we shall go.

14. Vānaprastha āśrama

There is no need to renounce family ties and leave for forests to lead an ascetic's life.

On the contrary, what is needed is to gradually withdraw from family matters and leave a society-oriented life.

As renunciation is impossible without first having practiced the path of (selfless) action .

Vānaprastha āśrama *a phase of transition.*

It is a Journey

from

material life
enjoyment
attachment
family
narrowness

to

spiritual life
renunciation
detachment
Community
broadness

Vānaprastha Lifestyle

स्वाध्याये नित्ययुक्तः स्याद् दान्तो मैत्रः समाहितः ।

दाता नित्यमनादाता सर्वभूतानुकम्पकः ॥ *Manu smṛti.6.8*

He should be always devoted to study,
with all his senses under control,
keep friendly behavior with everyone,
and have a tranquil mind.

He must always give in charity,
not accept gifts from others,
and have mercy on all living beings .

Vānaprastha Lifestyle

धृतिः क्षमा दमोऽस्तेयं शौचमिन्द्रियनिग्रहः ।

धीर्विद्या सत्यमक्रोधो दशकं धर्मलक्षणम् ॥ *Manu Smriti.6.92*

(1) Steadiness (2) Forgiveness, (3) Self-control, (4) Abstention from unrighteous appropriation, (5) Purity, (6) Control of the Sense-organs, (7) Discrimination, (8) Knowledge, (9) Truthfulness, and (10) Absence of anger,— these are the ten-fold forms of duty.

Vānaprastha Lifestyle

- ❖ Practice spiritual activities , Simple food & clothing.
- ❖ Control mind and senses.
- ❖ Reduce accumulations, clothing, belongings and food intake.
- ❖ Develop liking for solitude.
- ❖ Talk less hear more (Be a **muni**-one who observes silence).
- ❖ Render service with a sense of duty and a smile.
- ❖ Engage in full time selfless work, social service & creative work.

14. Vānaprastha āśrama

The practice is in discontinuation these days. Once entering the household, we just never want to get out of there. Immersed in the household we forget that we have to come out of it too.

The household is such an (*vyūha*) army formation in which, like Abhimanyu one enters but is unable to withdraw from it.

If you can't afford to retire yet, take partial retirement and gradually increase your involvement in social work.

15. Saṃ-nyāsa *The final stage of life*

दशलक्षणकं धर्ममनुतिष्ठन् समाहितः ।
वेदान्तं विधिवत्श्रुत्वा संन्यसेदनृणो द्विजः॥

Manu Smriti.6.94

The twice-born person, performing, with collected mind, the ten-fold Duty, and having duly learnt the Vedānta texts, and become free from debts, should take to Renunciation.

‘Renunciation’ consists of abandoning the notion that **‘this is mine’**.